

# NO STARFIELD, NO PLANETARIANS

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**Abstract:** Imagine a world with no starfield, with no planetarians. In the modern era, a diligent, ubiquitous power imposes its will on the realm of astronomy, keeping in check the language of centuries. Astronomy terms that have endured the ages are now routinely challenged by a tireless arbiter of legitimacy—namely, the software “spell check” feature on which we often rely.

## No Starfield, No Planetarians

Imagine a world with no starfield, with no planetarians. In the modern era, a diligent, ubiquitous power imposes its will on the realm of astronomy, keeping in check the language of centuries. Astronomy terms that have endured the ages are now routinely challenged by a tireless arbiter of legitimacy—namely, the software “spell check” feature on which we often rely.

This poster highlights words (here in italics) that trigger a red squiggly line by Microsoft Word’s spell check. While it is not ground-breaking news, the shortcomings of MSWord remind us of the limits of technology in interpreting the nuances of humans.

What triggered this inquiry into misspelled words? In tracking the movement of the noon sun through one year, I traced out an *analemma*. MSWord suggested I correct my written offense—by calling the traditional figure-eight shape “anal Emma.”

## General Terms

### *Starfield*

Two words—star and field—are permitted, but that’s not how I perceive the majesty of the firmament under the dome. A starfield is a singular grand vision to behold.

### *Planetarian*

A term attributed to Norman Sperling in 1971, the planetarium’s human feature is relegated to the heap of nonexistent words.

### *Syzygy?*

Suzy and sizing, perhaps, but no alignment of celestial bodies.

Astrobiology is known, just not around a *protostar*.

The observatory *Caracol* at *Chichen Itza* doesn’t exist, but you will find Caracas, Caracole, Carrack, Caracal, Curacao, and Caruso.

You can practice stargazing, but you can’t be a *skywatcher* who enjoys *skygazing*.

Faculae and prominences and the photosphere exist, but nary a *spicule* or *chromosphere* relate to the sun.

Adler and Armand Spitz and even Dome-L are legitimate, but the venerable *Zeiss* and *Trippensee* are not.

Sputnik lives.

Corona Borealis is visible in the north, yet Corona *Australis* is absent in the south.

*Ishtar of Mosul?* Never heard of it.

Newtonian telescopes reign, to the dismay of *Cassegrain*, *Maksutov*, and *catadioptric* models.

The *orrery* is ornery and orderly, but not the instrument of an Earl.

Among lunar terms, penumbra, gibbous, clefts, neap, perigee, apogee, elongation, and sidereal are valid. *Synodic*, *libration*, *rilles*, *graben*, and *regolith* are not.

*Gegenschein* elicits no suggestions.

*Hertzprung* is known only to Russell.

Galilean moons have been discovered, but the same cannot be said of *Jovian* moons.

*Aurorae?* Sorry, but the plural has been modernized with an “s” at the end. The plural of nebula, however, can be *nebulae*.

Meteoroids and fireballs and planetoids exist, but not the singular *bolide* (seems that it’s okay to have the plural—*bolides*).

You won’t find satellites at *Lagrangian* points, nor planets at *quadrature*.

## Constellations

MSWord spell check recognizes Cassiopeia, Cygnus, Aquarius, Libra, Hydra, Virgo, Gemini, Aries, Sagittarius, Pegasus and the Pleiades. Yet other constellations that merit a picture in an *American Heritage Dictionary* (shown on poster) are dismissed by the Microsoft editors.

*Perseus*

Parsees, peruse, parse, purse, or, perhaps, but no Perseus.

*Andromeda*

Adorned, endorsed, undreamed. But not recognized like her mother Cassiopeia.

*Corvus,*

Corves, corpus, curves and carves, but no proper name of the Crow.

*Scorpius*

Scorpio the scorpion triggers no digital objection, though the proper name dating back centuries does.

*Aquila*

Aquiline, Aula, Aquinas, and Quell all register, but not the ancient eagle.

*Sagitta*

You can be a Sagittarius, you can agitate, you can be the sanest and sagest by the proper Seagate. Just don't try to pass as Sagitta.

*Capricornus*

"Capricorn us" if you wish, though how it functions seemingly as a verb I do not know.

*Canis Major*

Cans, Cannes, cants, Can's, Cannas

*Lyra*

Lira, Liar, Lora, Lire

*Ursa*

Urea, bursa, ruse, eras, auras

*Lepus*

Lupus and Lexus and lapis

*Fornax*

Format, Forney, Forman, Fornix's, Foray, Formal

*Camelopardalis*

(no spelling suggestions)

*Cepheus*

Ciphers, Cepheid, Ephesus, Capes

*Draco*

Drano, Dracut, Deacon, Dace, Dario

**Stars**

Polaris and Vega have guided us for centuries. Betelgeuse and Sirius are acceptable. But woe be to the other distant giants of the night.

*Deneb*

Dine with Dina the Dane on a dune. Be done or be dense. You just can't be a beacon of the Summer Triangle.

*Thuban*

Recommended to be a Theban.

*Spica*

Spicer, space, spicy

*Capella*

Canella, Capelin, capillary, copula, cupola

*Algol*

Algal, Anglo, Alga, aglow, ago

*Canopus*

Can opus, canopies, campus, canapés, campos

*Regulus*

Regales, regulars, Romulus

*Antares*

An tares, nature, attars, kantars, altars, attires

*Arcturus*

Arturo's, raptures, actor's, rapturous